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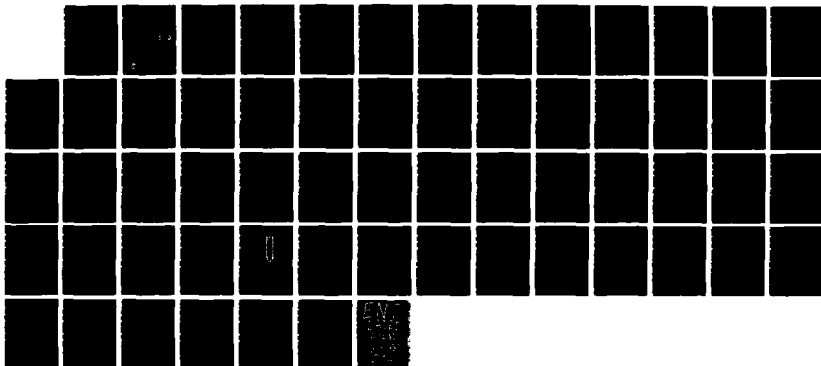
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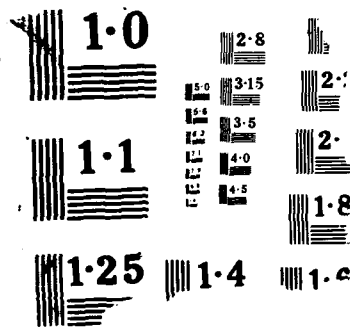
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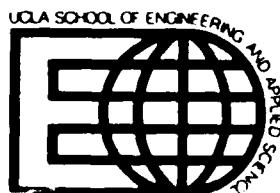
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**CREEP OF CARBON YARN AND  
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**by George Sines, Zheng Yang and Brian D. Vickers**

**ONR-N00014-85-K-0667  
L.H. Peebles, Monitor**

**UCLA-ENG-88-8  
May 1988**



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CREEP OF CARBON YARN AND CARBON-CARBON COMPOSITES

AT HIGH TEMPERATURES AND HIGH STRESSES

by  
George Sines, Zheng Yang, and Brian D. Vickers

Department of Materials Science and Engineering  
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Los Angeles

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of the carbon matrix's presence and independent of the specimens' loading history. Values of the pre-exponential constant for the carbon yarn and carbon composites were also calculated.

As stated in a previous report the carbon matrix greatly improves the creep resistance of the carbon composite. This improvement was attributed to the the matrix's microstructure. It distributes applied loads more evenly and it may also impose a triaxial stress state in the yarn's filaments. It is proposed that such a stress state may inhibit the flux of vacancies thus accounting in part for this increase in creep resistance. Another explanation, which states that only a fraction of the filaments in the matrix-free specimens are fully loaded during creep, is also considered.

Apparent activation volumes were calculated. Their magnitudes,  $2088 \text{ \AA}^3$  for the matrix-free specimen and  $1583 \text{ \AA}^3$  for the composite, suggest that diffusion occurs on a large, molecular size scale. Finally, a quantity which may be considered as the work required to activate the activation volume was derived and confirmed by the data.



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## ABSTRACT

To better understand the creep-behavior of carbon yarn and carbon-carbon composites, creep experiments were developed that permitted testing at high temperatures (up to 2500 C) and at high stresses (up to 850 MPa) on specially prepared, uniaxial specimens that had a known gage length. Using a Dorn-type power law relation to model steady-state creep the apparent activation energy for the carbon yarn and carbon composite specimens was determined to be 1082 kJ/mol. This value represents a single thermally activated process, vacancy diffusion, that compares favorably with the energies determined or calculated by other researchers for various types of graphitizable carbon. The value determined for the stress exponent was 7.5. It too was found to be independent of the carbon matrix's presence and independent of the specimens' loading history. Values of the pre-exponential constant for the carbon yarn and carbon composites were also calculated.

As stated in a previous report the carbon matrix greatly improves the creep resistance of the carbon composite. This improvement was attributed to the the matrix's microstructure. It distributes applied loads more evenly and it may also impose a triaxial stress state in the yarn's filaments. It is proposed that such a stress state may inhibit the flux of vacancies thus accounting in part for this increase in creep resistance. Another explanation, which states that only a fraction of the filaments in the matrix-free specimens are fully loaded during creep, is also considered.

Apparent activation volumes were calculated. Their magnitudes, 2088 Å<sup>3</sup> for the matrix-free specimen and 1583 Å<sup>3</sup> for the composite, suggest that diffusion

occurs on a large, molecular size scale. Finally, a quantity which may be considered as the work required to activate the activation volume was derived and confirmed by the data.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Impressive thermal characteristics such as stability up to temperatures of 3000 C make carbon in its many forms a high temperature material par excellence [1,2]. One of the most useful and promising of these forms is high-strength, high-stiffness, carbon fibers. When used to form carbon composites these fibers, with their excellent mechanical properties, have enabled carbon to reach beyond its refractory capabilities and into the realm of structural applications. The aerospace industry has so far benefited the most from carbon-carbon's abilities. Some established high-temperature structural applications include: re-entry components such as nose cones and leading edges, rocket nozzles, exhaust cones, and templates for super-plastic forming of metals [1].

Since high temperatures and stresses are encountered by carbon-carbon composites during their fabrication and sometimes during their service [3], there is considerable interest in this material's creep behavior. The fabrication of three-dimensional, carbon-carbon composite billets is one example where a knowledge of this behavior would aid in preventing costly manufacturing errors [4,5]. These billets, with their highly anisotropic thermal and mechanical properties, (as woven into a network of bundles and matrix pockets), experience high internal stresses during processing due to repeated heatings to the high temperatures of graphitization [3]. These stresses are often so high that debonding of the carbon bundles and cracking of the billet - sometimes catastrophically - can occur [5].

Carbon-carbon research has invested a great deal of effort in trying to understand what happens to these composite billets during fabrication. Recent work performed

here at UCLA, (including this report and refs. 4,6,7), has been concerned with the creep behavior of carbon-carbon composites at high stress levels and at high temperatures - conditions representative of those experienced by the billets as they're being processed. It is felt that the information derived from these studies might be used to develop more effective time-temperature processing paths which would utilize creep to relax the stresses generated within the billets.

A great deal of work is available on high temperature processes such as graphitization and deformation for various types of carbon, graphite, and their fibers. Work concerned with carbon-carbon composite creep, however, is limited to only a few studies such as the prior work by the authors [7] and that reported by Feldman [8,9,10] which tested for uniaxial tensile creep in unimpregnated and pitch-impregnated (composite) carbon yarn. A distinguishing characteristic of the authors' initial tests was the high stress levels (770 MPa; 112 ksi) reached during experimentation. These high stress levels showed that the microstructure of the carbon matrix significantly enhances the yarn's resistance to creep deformation. This improvement in creep resistance was attributed to the matrix's ability to distribute loads more evenly and to the likely imposition of a plastic flow inhibiting, triaxial stress state in the well-bonded filaments of the carbon yarn. Testing at these stress levels also revealed that the creep response of the impregnated carbon yarn had a rather large primary stage [7].

This report is a continuation of the above work. Additional creep tests, which varied both the load and the temperature, have been performed. From these tests the apparent activation energy, the stress exponent, and the pre-exponential constant for both unimpregnated carbon yarn

and carbon composite yarn have been determined. These results were compared with those obtained by other investigators for pyrolytic carbons and graphites in an attempt to identify the thermally activated process. An explanation is also given why the carbon matrix is so influential in the creep resistance of the carbon fibers. The apparent activation volume as well as a theoretically derived quantity that may be considered as the work required to activate the apparent activation volume have also been determined in an effort to explain and characterize the materials' behavior.

## 2. EXPERIMENTAL

### 2.1 Materials

The materials used in the preparation of uniaxial, carbon-carbon composite specimens were the following: HM3000 polyacrylonitrile-based (PAN) yarn (Hercules) was used for fibers and 15V coal-tar pitch (Allied) was used as matrix precursor. The HM3000 yarn consist of 3000 filaments, each with a nominal diameter of 7 microns, and has a Young's modulus of 380 GPa (55 Msi) along the fiber's axis. The as-received yarn had a protective sizing on it which was removed thermally before the specimen was prepared. The pitch was also thermally pre-treated to remove many of the volatiles, prior to the specimen's impregnation. Manufacturers' data are presented in table 1.

### 2.2 Test Specimens

Figure 1 is a drawing of a test specimen. Details on its design, fabrication and heat treatment can be found in the previous report [7]. All specimens were slowly carbonized to 900 C before being tested for creep. Of note is the test section which provided a known gage length of one inch and the reinforced ends which permitted testing at high stress levels. There were two types of specimens used for creep testing: composite specimens which had an impregnated test section and specimens which had a matrix-free test section. All of the specimens' reinforced ends were impregnated with pitch and carbonized to provide strength for testing.



### 2.3 Apparatus

The high temperature creep tests were performed in a modified Astro furnace (model 2250), which had a graphite heating element. The furnace was controlled manually. Its temperature profile was approximately parabolic with the hot zone centered over the test section; short-time temperature fluctuations are estimated to be from 1 to 5 C and were quickly corrected manually. Changes in elongation were monitored by an LVDT (Schaevitz) which had DC inputs and outputs and a sensitivity of 0.50 mm/V. Furnace temperature was measured and controlled via an optical pyrometer (Honeywell). A loading beam was used to stabilize the load and the specimen. It consisted of a beam supported on knife edges on a frame anchored to the base of the furnace (the LVDT's output was amplified by its positioning on the loading beam away from the loading axis). An inert atmosphere of helium at a pressure of about 5 cm (2 in) of water was maintained during testing. Data was collected on an x-y recorder as elongation versus time. See figure 2 for a schematic of the test equipment and figure 3 for a detailed drawing of the apparatus. A more complete description concerning the design of the testing apparatus can also be found in the previous report [7].

### 2.4 Procedure

Each test specimen was hung vertically in the furnace between two graphite pin and clevis fixtures. Specimens were slowly heated to the desired initial test temperature and held there (this 'holding time' ranged from 10 to 20 min) while under a small pre-load of 272 g (0.6 lb). Application of test loads was slowly done in steps and without shock via the slow release of the loading beam. Thermal, elastic and creep responses were all recorded as

elongation versus time for both the composite and the matrix-free uniaxial test specimens.

Since there is often a great deal of scatter in creep results, a statistical method called the Chauvenet Criterion [11] was used to check if individual values were valid or not. As for different groups of results - specifically those of the composite specimens versus those of the 'dry' - a statistical method called the Sum of Ranks Test [12] was used to judge whether the results from one group were remarkably different from that of the others.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Carbon Yarn Creep

Studies, such as the ones done by Hawthorne [13] on the stretch graphitization of vitreous carbon fibers and by Feldman on graphite fibers indicate a thermally activated, steady state creep rate  $\dot{\epsilon}$  which is dependent on the stress  $\sigma$  and the temperature  $T$

$$\dot{\epsilon} = A\sigma^n \exp(-Q/RT) \quad \text{eqn. 1}$$

where  $n$  is the stress exponent,  $R$  is the gas constant,  $A$  is a pre-exponential factor, and  $Q$  is the apparent activation energy. This is one of the power-law forms of the Dorn equation for creep [see Poirier, 14, p.91]. It should be noted that  $Q$ , as determined from the slope of the plot of the logarithm of the strain rate versus inverse temperature does not account for any dependence that the shear modulus might have on the temperature, [eg., see Langdon, 15], and how this dependence may influence the mobility of atomic defects.

Equation 1 concentrates on the thermal response of the fibers which control the strength and stiffness of the composite. This is unlike most models used to describe the creep of continuous fiber composites which factor in (usually by some rule of mixtures) the contribution of the creeping matrix phase to the overall behavior [16]. This is not to imply that the carbon matrix is not important to the overall behavior. It just doesn't act as the composite's limiting phase because its melting point is not lower than that of the fibers and its mechanical properties are very poor when compared to those of the fibers.

### 3.2 Determining the Stress Exponent and Apparent Activation Energy from the Data

The value of the stress exponent  $n$  was determined from the slope of the plot of the logarithm of the steady-state strain rate versus the logarithm of the stress. Data were acquired via step-loading each specimen at a constant temperature. These steps were alternated between increasing and decreasing load increments to see if the creep behavior and the value of the stress exponent were dependent on the loading history. Steady-state strain rate values were obtained from the slope of the linear recording made between load steps. Schematics showing the type of loading used are presented in figure 4.

Stress values for both the matrix-free and the composite specimens were calculated using the net area of the carbon yarn. These calculations were based upon the assumption that the yarn carries almost all of the load in these composites. Since the diameter of the specimens are continuously decreasing during the creep deformation the stress data were corrected to represent the true stress.

$$\sigma = \sigma_0(1+\epsilon) \quad \text{eqn.2}$$

where  $\sigma$  is the mean true stress at each load step,  $\sigma_0$  is the initial engineering stress, ( $\sigma_0 = P/A_0$ ;  $P$  is the applied load,  $A_0$  is the initial cross-sectional area of the yarn at the test section), and  $\epsilon$  is the average engineering strain at each load step.

The apparent activation energy  $Q$  for creep deformation was determined from the slope of the plot of the logarithm of the steady-state strain rate versus the inverse temperature, (an Arrhenius plot). A schematic of a typical portion of the creep curve used to gather this constant stress data is shown in figure 5. Only increasing

temperature steps were performed. Since calculations for the data acquired here assumed a constant stress, the above stress corrections could not be made at each temperature step. Instead, a single, average corrected stress was used as determined between the beginning and the end of the increasing-temperature curve.

The creep test of a matrix-free ('dry') specimen which involved both step-loading and increasing temperature steps is shown in figure 6. After the desired test temperature was reached, held and deemed stabilized, an initial load was applied ( $t=0$  in the graphs), and a transient response recorded. Each time that the deformation rate achieved a steady-state, the applied load was incrementally increased or decreased. This procedure was then followed by a period of increasing temperature steps until the end of the test. Thus, from each specimen, a value of the stress exponent and the apparent activation energy could be determined from a single trial. This data could then be used to calculate the pre-exponential constant A.

Four carbon composite specimens and five matrix-free ('dry') specimens were tested in this manner. Temperatures ranged from 2120 to 2430 C. Stresses ranged from 455 to 800 MPa (66 to 116 ksi), with the matrix-free specimens tested at the lower stress levels as they were less creep resistant. Two additional composite specimens were also tested at constant temperature and stress conditions. This was done to obtain a simplified perspective of the creep-behavior, as well as to determine if the time spent at the test temperature just prior to load application (the 'holding-time') would have any effect.

It should be noted that the initial thermal and elastic responses of the creep specimens, which were large, depended not only on the specimens' properties but also on the

compliance and expansion coefficient of the furnace and load train. Furthermore, the manner in which the specimens' end loops seated themselves on their pin and clevis fixtures during the initial loading affected the compliance and was surely different for each specimen. Because of these variables these initial responses provided no useful data.

### 3.3 Effect of Holding-Time

Graphitization of the fibers is a function of the heat treatment temperature [1] and also of the applied stress which accelerates the dewrinkling process [17]. By enhancing the preferred orientation, these processes improve the elastic modulus and also may improve the fiber's strength [18]. Because of these potential changes in mechanical properties, the decision was made to try and observe the effect that the holding time might have on the creep-behavior of the specimens.

Two composite specimens (G6 and G7) were prepared for comparison. They were tested under similar condition except for the time that they were held at the test temperature (2310 C) while under the pre-load (272g; 0.6 lbs). Specimen G6 was held only 5 minutes while specimen G7 was held for 1 hour. The results of these tests are shown in table 2. See figure 7 for a comparison of the two curves.

The results show that the composite specimen G7 was somewhat more creep resistant than G6, but not by a significant amount. This is not very surprising since HM3000, a PAN-based fiber, is already graphitized about as much as it can be at 2310 C. The interlayer distance  $d$  vs. HTT curves (ref. 1, p.171] for various carbon fibers show almost no decrease in  $d$  ( $d = c/2 = 0.346$  nm) between 2100 and 2500 C for PAN-based fibers; though the fact that our

specimens were also highly stressed may have improved this value. Given that creep data is prone to scatter and that most specimens were held from 10 to 25 minutes, it is felt that spending more time at the holding temperature would not significantly change the mechanical properties of these specimens and thereby affect the results.

### 3.4 Creep Behavior of Carbon-Carbon Composites

The G6 and G7 curves (figure 7) also provide a good representation of the creep behavior of carbon composites at high temperatures and high stress levels. A rather large transient response is notable. After one hour the creep strain measured for these two trials is already a significant percentage (37 and 38 per cent) of the total deformation after six hours. This transient portion of the creep curve is most likely a combination of several mechanisms which act in concert with the thermally activated process. These mechanisms may include: graphitization, dewrinkling and sliding of fiber crystallites, and the collapse of fiber pores [see the structural models of carbon fibers presented in ref. 18].

With the decay of the transient response the steady-state response became apparent. This response at these high stress levels was very sensitive to any changes in the temperature. Fluctuations in the temperature of the furnace or even in the surrounding environment would register as small, but perceptible, deviations in the slope until the test temperature was re-established.

### 3.5 Apparent Activation Energy

The Arrhenius plots used to determine the apparent activation energy for the four composite and five matrix-free specimens are compiled in figure 8 while the data are presented in table 3. The average values of 1110 kJ/mol (265 kcal/mol) for the composite specimens and 1058 kJ/mol (253 kcal/mol) for the dry specimens were determined as not significantly different. Because of the excellent agreement between the values of  $Q$  for the two types of specimens, the conclusion is made that the same thermally activated process occurs in the carbon yarn regardless of the presence of the carbon matrix.

Tabulated lists that compare the experimental results of many researchers for high temperature creep and graphitization [see Hawthorne 13; Cannon 19, p.27; and Fischbach 17, p.65] show that for many pyrolytic carbons, graphites and cokes, the value of the apparent activation energy falls in the 960 to 1170 kJ/mol range (230 to 280 kcal/mol). Especially supportive were the values obtained by Granoff [20] for the graphitization of carbon-felt/CVD carbon-matrix composites (1005 and 1155 kJ/mol). The mean value of 1082 kJ/mol (258 kcal/mol) as determined from the nine creep tests in this report, is quite comparable to these results.

The activation energies for carbon atoms in graphite were theoretically calculated by Dienes [21] and then by Kanter [22] (see table 4). Their results, along with the evidence cited in the lists referenced above, indicate that there is a well-defined activation energy which is representative of a single high-temperature process [17]. This process involves the formation and motion of vacancies (vacancy controlled diffusion) and it is regarded as the primary mechanism during the graphitization and/or the high



temperatures deformation of graphitizable carbons. Since the results of the tests performed in this study on PAN-based carbon yarn and carbon-carbon composites compare favorably to the reported results of other carbon materials, the diffusion of vacancies is also regarded as the steady-state creep mechanism in these tests.

### 3.6 Diffusion in the Presence of the Matrix

In the previous report [7], it was reported that a matrix-free specimen ruptured with approximately 140% strain after only 0.39 hours of testing (constant temperature of 2310 C; constant stress of 770 MPa, 112 ksi). These results were significantly different than those of a composite specimen tested at the same conditions which endured only 3.6% strain after 5.9 hours without failure. As stated in section 3.5, the formation and motion of vacancies is regarded as the thermally activated creep mechanism in the carbon yarn - irrespective of the matrix. Yet as shown, the carbon matrix does wield considerable influence; its presence greatly improves the composite's creep resistance. This improvement was attributed to the alignment and proper bonding of the carbonaceous mesophase layers in the matrix. This type of microstructure creates a 'sheath effect' which more evenly distributes loads and which may also generate a triaxial stress state that inhibits plastic flow in the filaments of the carbon yarn.

This mechanical enhancement by the well-bonded matrix can possibly be related to the diffusion mechanism in the carbon yarns and composites by considering the effect that the stress state has on the shear stress. With the imposition of a triaxial stress state the shear stress is necessarily reduced (becoming zero for equal triaxial stresses). If the motion of defects relies on the magnitude

of the shear stress [14], then the carbon filaments of the dry specimens, which experience disproportionate, uniaxial stresses and hence a higher shear stress, have a greater flux of vacancies and therefore creep faster. This can explain why more load (perhaps much more) is needed to generate the same flux of vacancies in the composite specimens as that which caused the high deformation rates in the matrix-free specimens.

### 3.7 Apparent Activation Volume

The expression for the apparent activation volume as used by Hawthorne [13] for the stretch-graphitization of glassy carbon fibers was

$$V = 2kT \left( \frac{d \ln \dot{\epsilon}}{d \sigma} \right) \quad \text{eqn. 3}$$

where  $k$  is Boltzman's constant,  $T$  is the absolute temperature,  $\dot{\epsilon}$  is the steady state strain rate and  $\sigma$  is the applied stress. Ishai [23] regarded the quantity  $V_0$  "as the volume of the activated segmental unit involved in the diffusion process" - a structural parameter which is the product of the interatomic distance  $\lambda_1$ , the intermolecular distance  $\lambda_2$ , and the jump distance  $\lambda_0$ . It should be noted that the expression used by Hawthorne and by some other authors to define the apparent activation volume considers only half the jump distance  $\delta$ , ( $\delta = \lambda_0 / 2$  and  $V = V_0 / 2$ ) [23]. (In this report this factor of two was used.) It is not completely clear on whether the apparent activation volume, as defined by Ishai and used by Hawthorne, refers to a volume in which diffusion occurs in, or to an actual volume which is moving.

The values of  $V_0$  calculated in this study, (see table 5), were determined from the data collected during the constant temperature, step-loading portion of each

specimen's creep curve. Since step-loading intervals were repeated several times for each specimen, a great deal of data could be acquired. A typical plot of the data compiled from one specimen, in this case, specimen F4, is shown in figure 9.

A check of the sum of ranks test shows that the difference between the matrix-free and composite specimens must be judged as significant. Indeed, the apparent activation volume of the carbon composite is 24% smaller than the matrix-free yarn. So even though the deformation mechanism of vacancy diffusion prevails for the two specimen types, the size of the 'volume' involved in this process is different due to the presence of the carbon matrix. It is not clear to the authors why this is so.

The two values of  $V_0$  determined here, like the value determined by Hawthorne for his glassy carbon fibers (approximately  $4000 \text{ \AA}^3$ ), are of the same order as the apparent activation volumes found for some glassy polymers which have been subjected to high temperature deformation [13]. Hawthorne stated that this suggests that the diffusion process may operate on a molecular level and that the size of this macromolecule may be related to the size of the crystallites (the platelets of basal planes) found in the turbostratic structure of the carbon fibers.

### 3.8 The Work Required to Activate $V_0$

Equation 3 can be rewritten as

$$V_0 = 4kT \frac{1}{\epsilon} \left( \frac{d\epsilon}{d\sigma} \right) \quad \text{eqn. 4}$$

this includes a factor of two as suggested in Ishai's paper.

Differentiating equation 1 with respect to stress yields

$$\frac{d\dot{\epsilon}}{d\sigma} = \frac{\dot{\epsilon}n}{\sigma} \quad \text{eqn. 5}$$

And substitution of equation 5 into equation 4 gives

$$V_0\sigma = 4kTn \quad \text{eqn. 6}$$

where the product on the left hand side may be regarded as the work  $W_0$  needed to activate  $V_0$ .

The quantities in equation 6, as calculated from the test data, are presented in table 6. These results were derived from the constant temperature, step-loading portion of the creep tests. The stress values used for each specimen represent an average of all the stresses used during the step-loading. The values used for the stress exponent are the ones presented in table 7.

The excellent agreement of these results support the formulation of equation 6; that for a given material within a certain stress range the work and the apparent activation volume can be calculated at a given temperature. Equation 6 also implies that the apparent activation volume  $V_0$  is linearly related to the inverse of the stress with the slope of this plot being stress exponent  $n$  dependent. Figure 10 shows this experimentally.

### 3.9 Stress Exponent and the Effect of Loading History

Table 7 lists the values of the stress exponent  $n$  for the matrix-free and composite specimens; there is no significant difference between the values of  $n$  for the two types of specimens. Plots of the logarithm of the strain rate versus the logarithm of the stress are compiled in figure 11 for three of the specimens. The results of other researchers, as listed by Hawthorne [13] and by Cannon [19],

show that a majority of the stress exponent values determined for graphites, fall in the 6 to 8 range. (These graphites also had activation energies in the 1000 kJ/mol range). The average value determined in this study of 7.5 compares favorably with these graphites. Obviously, creep-behavior is highly dependent on the stress.

Step-loading, whether it be in increasing or decreasing increments, had no effect on the stress dependence. This is shown by the relatively parallel lines of figure 11 - an experimental result which was observed for all the specimens.

### 3.10 Pre-Exponential Constant

The values of the apparent activation energy and the stress exponent, as determined for the carbon composite and matrix-free specimens, were found not to be significantly different via the sum of ranks test. Since the creep resistance of the composite specimens is much greater than that of the matrix-free specimens, when tested at the same temperature and applied load, this observed difference must manifest itself in the pre-exponential constant of equation 1.

The values of the pre-exponential constant  $A$  as calculated for the two specimen types are presented in table 8. The determination of  $A$  is dependent on the units used; the units used for the stress were 'MPa' while the units used for the steady-state strain rate were ' $\text{min}^{-1}$ '. Because step-loading provided many values of the strain rate at different stress levels for each specimen, it was possible to calculate many values of the pre-exponential constant. Thus the results in table 8 are each specimen's average value. It was assumed that  $A$  was a constant.

The average value of  $A$  for the matrix-free specimens ( $12.2 \times 10^{-3}$ ) is larger than the average value for the composites ( $2.71 \times 10^{-3}$ ), (granted, there is a large uncertainty in these values). This order of magnitude difference is undoubtedly related to the presence of the matrix. As discussed in section 3.6, the well-bonded matrix in the composite specimens distributes the applied load more evenly amongst the carbon filaments of their test sections. It was even suggested that the matrix creates a 'sheath effect' which sets up a plastic flow inhibiting, triaxial stress state in the bonded filaments. But since the values of  $n$  and  $Q$  have been found to be the same irrespective of the matrix, the explanation for the poor creep resistance of the matrix-free specimens may simply be that only a fraction of the carbon filaments in these specimens are fully loaded at any given time during their tests. This conclusion is logical because there is no matrix to distribute loads and because of the following considerations: since the one inch gage-length is long when compared to the filaments' diameter, many of the filaments may not extend the whole length of the test section and thus may not be anchored into the matrix-reinforced ends; secondly many of the filaments may be twisted or wrinkled in the test section and thus not fully contribute to the resistance of the axially applied loads. Hence, the filaments of a matrix-free test section, which are left to support the load, creep and rupture before the rest of the filaments can lend their support. This process continues in an accelerated, sequential manner until the entire test section fails.

Some cursory calculations prove interesting here. At the same nominal stress and temperature, the steady-state strain rate of the matrix-free ('dry') specimens is greater than that of the composite specimens.

$$\dot{\epsilon}_{\text{dry}} > \dot{\epsilon}_{\text{composite}}$$

Now assuming that equation 1 is representative of the steady-state creep behavior of the specimens and assuming that  $A$  is a constant, since the the values of  $n$  and  $Q$  are the same for each specimen type, the pre-exponential constant must be greater for the matrix-free specimen.

$$A_{\text{dry}} > A_{\text{composite}}$$

This was shown to be true in table 8.

If only a fraction of the filaments in the matrix-free specimens actually pick up the load, then the stress experienced by these filaments will be higher than the nominal stress in the composite specimens.

$$\sigma > \sigma_{\text{nominal}} \quad (\text{or}) \quad \sigma = k\sigma_{\text{nominal}}$$

$$\text{and therefore,} \quad A_{\text{dry}} = k^n A_{\text{composite}}$$

Where  $k$  is a constant. Using the average values from table 8 for the pre-exponential constant and setting the stress exponent equal to 7.5, one gets a value of 1.22 for  $k$ .

These calculations estimate that the true stress experienced by those matrix-free filaments that are actually loaded during creep is approximately 20% higher than the nominal stress experienced by their well-bonded counterparts. This implies that the values of  $n$  and  $Q$  obtained in this study are probably valid for much higher stress levels than those at which the composites were tested.

#### 4. SUMMARY

In an effort to improve the understanding of the thermomechanical behavior of carbon yarn and carbon-carbon composites the following was accomplished:

Creep-behavior in uniaxial composites at high temperatures and high stresses is characterized by an initial, large transient stage followed by a steady-state response which can be modeled by a Dorn-type creep relation. The implications involved here lie with the proposal that creep be used to relieve stresses in fiber bundles during the fabrication of carbon-carbon billets. Instead of designing time-temperature processing paths on steady-state creep predictions, more of the attention should be given to the large, primary response.

The apparent activation energy for the composite and dry specimen was measured as 1082 kJ/mol (258 kcal/mol). It represents a single, thermally activated process which is the same in both specimens irrespective of the matrix. It also compares favorably with values determined by other researchers for various pyrolytic carbons, graphites, and cokes. The conclusion drawn from this comparison is that the thermally activated process is the same in all these materials for high temperature processes such as graphitization and deformation. This process is vacancy formation and motion (diffusion).

The stress state can be used to explain how the matrix improves the creep resistance of the carbon yarn. If one assumes that the matrix imposes a triaxial stress state in well-bonded yarn filaments, then the shear stress is reduced in these filaments and the flux of vacancies is therefore lessened.



Though the apparent activation energy was determined to be the same in the composite and dry uniaxial creep specimens, the apparent activation volume  $V_0$  was not. Values determined for  $V_0$  were  $1583 \text{ \AA}^3$  for the composite and  $2088 \text{ \AA}^3$  for the dry. These are of the same order as molecular scale deformation processes in some organic polymers and suggest that vacancy controlled diffusion occurs not on the atomic scale in the carbon yarn but on some 'crystallite scale'.

A quantity which represents the work needed to activate the activation volume was proposed. It can be expressed by the simple equation

$$V_0 \sigma = 4kTn$$

This expression was confirmed by the data.

The stress exponent was determined to be 7.5 thus showing that the creep behavior is highly dependent on the applied load. This value serves both the dry and composite specimen and was found to be independent of the loading history.

The pre-exponential factor  $A$  was also determined. Its value was found to be  $2.71 \times 10^{-3}$  for the composite specimen and  $12.2 \times 10^{-3}$  for the matrix-free specimens. It was suggested that the difference in the creep resistance between the two specimen types may be explained simply by assuming that only a fraction of the filaments in the matrix-free specimens are fully loaded during creep. These results also suggested that the values of the stress exponent and the apparent activation energy may be valid at higher stress levels than those tested at in this study.

Combining the above results into the Dorn expression, steady-state creep in carbon yarn and carbon-carbon composites can be expressed as:

$$\ln \dot{\epsilon} = (-6.59) + (7.49) \ln \sigma - (1082 \text{ kJ/mol})/RT \quad (\text{composite})$$

$$\ln \dot{\epsilon} = (-4.96) + (7.49) \ln \sigma - (1082 \text{ kJ/mol})/RT \quad (\text{dry, matrix-free})$$

where the stress is measured in 'MPa', and the steady-state strain rate is measured in 'min<sup>-1</sup>'.

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TABLE 1

Carbon yarn and coal tar pitch properties as provided by the manufacturers.

HM 3000 PAN Fibers

Fabricated by Hercules Incorporated Magnamite Graphite-Fibers Division (room temperature)

|                                   |                |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Density (g/cm <sup>3</sup> )      | 9.014          |
| Impregnated Strength (MPa)        | 2413 (350 ksi) |
| Young's Modulus, axial (GPa)      | 372 (54 Msi)   |
| Young's Modulus, transverse (GPa) | 10.3 (1.5 Msi) |

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CP277-15V coal-tar pitch

Processed by Allied Chemical Corporation

|                              |       |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Density (g/cm <sup>3</sup> ) | 1.35  |
| Coking Value (%)             | 48.2  |
| Benzene Insolubles (%)       | 12-18 |
| Quinoline Insolubles (%)     | 4-8   |
| Ash (%)                      | 0.23  |

TABLE 2

Carbon-carbon composite creep data.  
Effect of 'holding time'.

|    | Holding Time<br>(min) | Steady State<br>Strain Rate $\dot{\epsilon}$<br>(in/h) | CREEP ELONGATION      |                       |
|----|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|    |                       |  | after 1 h.            | after 6 h.            |
| G6 | 5                     | $4.39 \times 10^{-3}$                                  | $1.39 \times 10^{-2}$ | $3.77 \times 10^{-2}$ |
| G7 | 65                    | $3.14 \times 10^{-3}$                                  | $1.20 \times 10^{-2}$ | $3.13 \times 10^{-2}$ |

TABLE 3

Values of apparent activation energy,  $Q$ , for the composite and dry specimens.

| Specimen    | Constant Stress<br>$\sigma$<br>(MPa) | Temp. Range<br>$T$<br>(°C) | App. Activation Energy<br>$Q$<br>(kJ/mol) |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Composite   |                                      |                            |   |
| G1          | 724                                  | 2150-2265                  | 1016                                      |
| G2          | 600                                  | 2150-2220                  | 1112                                      |
| G3          | 800                                  | 2120-2300                  | 1225                                      |
| G4          | 827                                  | 2170-2300                  | 1055                                      |
|             |                                      |                            | <u>1110 ±92 (avg.)</u>                    |
| Matrix-Free |                                      |                            |   |
| F1          | 455                                  | 2150-2430                  | 1241                                      |
| F4          | 538                                  | 2250-2400                  | 990                                       |
| F5          | 572                                  | 2120-2300                  | 1028                                      |
| F6          | 648                                  | 2250-2370                  | 1043                                      |
| F7          | 607                                  | 2120-2280                  | 1025                                      |
|             |                                      |                            | <u>1058 ±84 (avg.)</u>                    |
|             |                                      |                            | <u>1082 ±92 (avg.)</u>                    |

TABLE 4

Theoretical activation energies for carbon atoms in graphite as calculated by Dienes [ref. 29, 1952] and later by Kanter [ref. 30, 1957].

| Process  | Energy (kJ/mol) |             |
|--|-----------------|-------------|
|  | Dienes          | Kanter      |
| Formation of Vacancy                               | 500             | 711         |
| Motion of Vacancy                                  | 299             | 389         |
| Total Energy for Diffusion<br>by Vacancy Mechanism | 799             | <u>1100</u> |
| Direct Interchange                                 | 378             | 473         |
| Interstitial Mechanism                             | 1745            | 1955        |
|  | Dienes          | Kanter      |



TABLE 5

Apparent activation volume.

| Specimen    | $\frac{\Delta \ln \dot{\epsilon}}{\Delta \sigma}$ (avg.)<br>(1/ksi) | App. Activation Volume<br>$V_o$<br>( $\text{\AA}^3$ ) |
|-------------|---|---|
| Composite   |   |   |
| G1          | 0.0794  | 1640  |
| G2          | 0.0909  | 1878  |
| G3          | 0.0778  | 1608  |
| G4          | 0.0584  | 1208  |
|             |   | <u>1583 (avg.)</u>                                    |
| Matrix-Free |   |   |
| F1          | 0.1224  | 2529  |
| F4          | 0.0998  | 2062  |
| F5          | 0.1048  | 2166  |
| F6          | 0.0907  | 1874  |
| F7          | 0.0875  | 1808  |
|             |   | <u>2088 (avg.)</u>                                    |

$$V_o = 4kT \left( \frac{\Delta \ln \dot{\epsilon}}{\Delta \sigma} \right) \quad \text{at constant temperature.}$$

Temp. = 2310 °C (2583 °K) for all data.

TABLE 6

Work required to activate  $V_o$ .  
See equation 6.

| Specimen    | $\bar{\sigma}$<br>(MPa) | $V_o \bar{\sigma}$ ( $=W_o$ )<br>( $J \times 10^{-19}$ ) | $4kTn$<br>( $J \times 10^{-19}$ ) |
|-------------|-------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Composite   |                         |  |                                   |
| G1          | 671                     | 11.01  | 11.13                             |
| G2          | 603                     | 11.34  | 10.59                             |
| G3          | 705                     | 11.35  | 11.40                             |
| G4          | 858                     | 10.38  | 10.90                             |
|             |                         | $11.02 \pm 0.45$   | $11.01 \pm 0.34$ (avg.)           |
| Matrix-Free |                         |  |                                   |
| F1          | 394                     | 9.98   | 9.88                              |
| F4          | 465                     | 9.60   | 9.27                              |
| F5          | 523                     | 11.34  | 10.84                             |
| F6          | 656                     | 12.31  | 12.40                             |
| F7          | 556                     | 10.05  | 10.12                             |
|             |                         | $10.62 \pm 1.06$   | $10.50 \pm 1.20$ (avg.)           |
|             |                         | $10.82 \pm 0.87$   | $10.73 \pm 0.91$ (avg.)           |
|             |                         | $10.77 \pm 0.87$ (avg. of all data)                      |                                   |

$T = 2310^\circ \text{C}$

$n$  values are found in table 8

$$\bar{\sigma} = 1/N(\sigma_1 + \sigma_2 + \dots + \sigma_N)$$

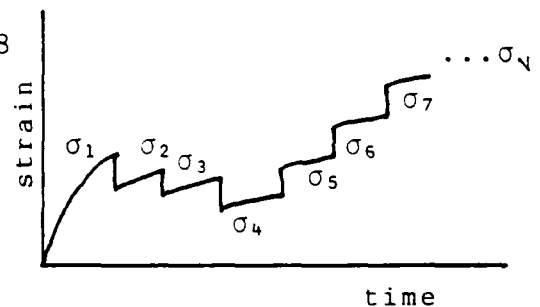


TABLE 7

The stress exponent  $n$ .

| Specimen    | Const. Temp.<br>$T$<br>(°C) | Stress Range<br>$\sigma_o$<br>(MPa) | $n$                    |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Composite   |                             |                                     |                        |
| G1          | 2310                        | 462-770                             | 7.81                   |
| G2          | 2310                        | 424-770                             | 7.43                   |
| G3          | 2310                        | 539-809                             | 8.00                   |
| G4          | 2310                        | 693-1002                            | 7.15                   |
|             |                             |                                     | <u>7.60</u> $\pm 0.40$ |
| Matrix-Free |                             |                                     |                        |
| F1          | 2310                        | 308-424                             | 6.93                   |
| F4          | 2310                        | 385-501                             | 6.50                   |
| F5          | 2310                        | 424-559                             | 7.61                   |
| F6          | 2310                        | 539-732                             | 8.70                   |
| F7          | 2310                        | 424-616                             | 7.06                   |
|             |                             |                                     | <u>7.36</u> $\pm 0.84$ |
|             |                             |                                     | <u>7.47</u> $\pm 0.66$ |

TABLE 8

Values of the pre-exponential constant A.

| Composite Specimen     | G1                | G2    | G3    | G4    |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| ln A (avg)             | -6.14             | -4.89 | -6.95 | -8.39 |
|                        | $-6.594 \pm 1.47$ |       |       |       |
| A ( $\times 10^{-3}$ ) | 2.15              | 7.52  | 0.96  | 0.23  |
|                        | $2.71 \pm 3.3$    |       |       |       |

| Matrix-Free Specimen   | F1               | F4    | F5    | F6    | F7    |
|------------------------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ln A (avg)             | -3.37            | -4.36 | -4.92 | -6.94 | -5.21 |
|                        | $-4.96 \pm 1.31$ |       |       |       |       |
| A ( $\times 10^{-3}$ ) | 34.4             | 12.8  | 7.3   | 0.97  | 5.46  |
|                        | $12.2 \pm 13.0$  |       |       |       |       |

The pre-exponential constant was calculated using the following expression:

$$\ln A = \ln \dot{\epsilon} - \bar{n}(\ln \sigma) + \bar{Q}/RT$$

Where the steady-state strain rate and the stress (corrected for strain) were measured from the step-loading portion of each specimen's creep test.

The units used were:  $\dot{\epsilon}$  [ $\text{min}^{-1}$ ]

$\sigma$  [MPa]

The other constants used were as follows:

| Composite Specimens, G   | $\bar{n}$ | $\bar{Q}$ (cal/mol) | R (cal/mol °K) | T (°K) |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------------------|----------------|--------|
|                          | 7.599     | 263,200             | 1.987          | 2583   |
| Matrix-Free Specimens, F | 7.360     | 252,740             | 1.987          | 2583   |

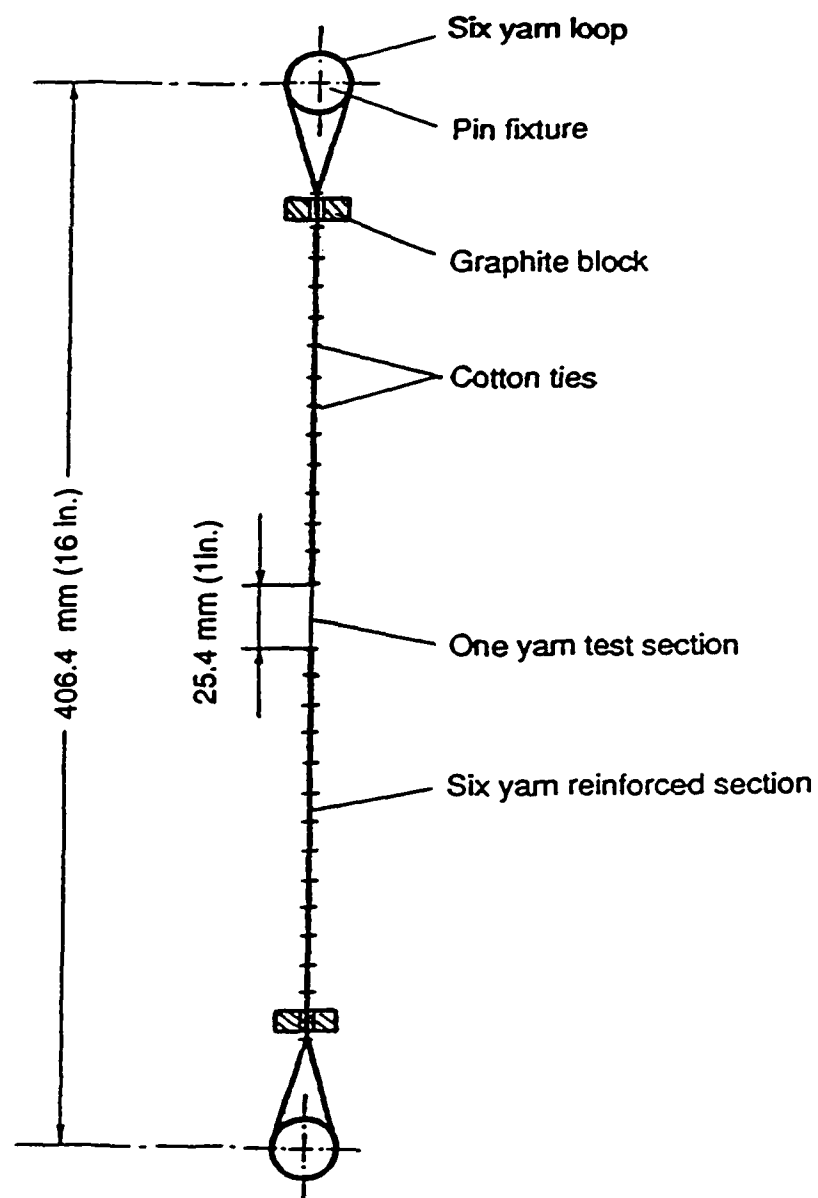


Fig. 1. Diagram of a uniaxial creep specimen. A single carbon yarn makes up the test section and extends the length of the specimen.

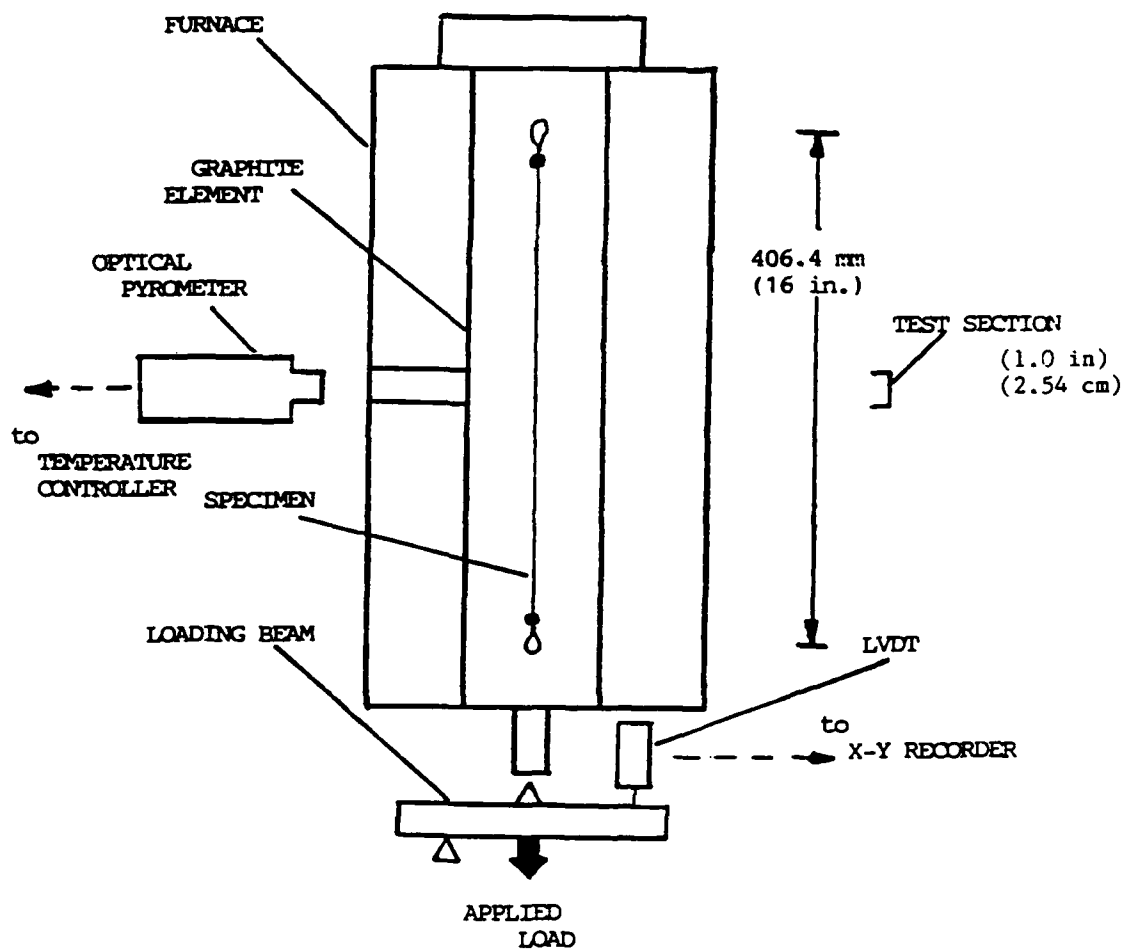


Fig. 2. Schematic of the testing apparatus. See figure 3 for a detailed drawing of the furnace arrangement.

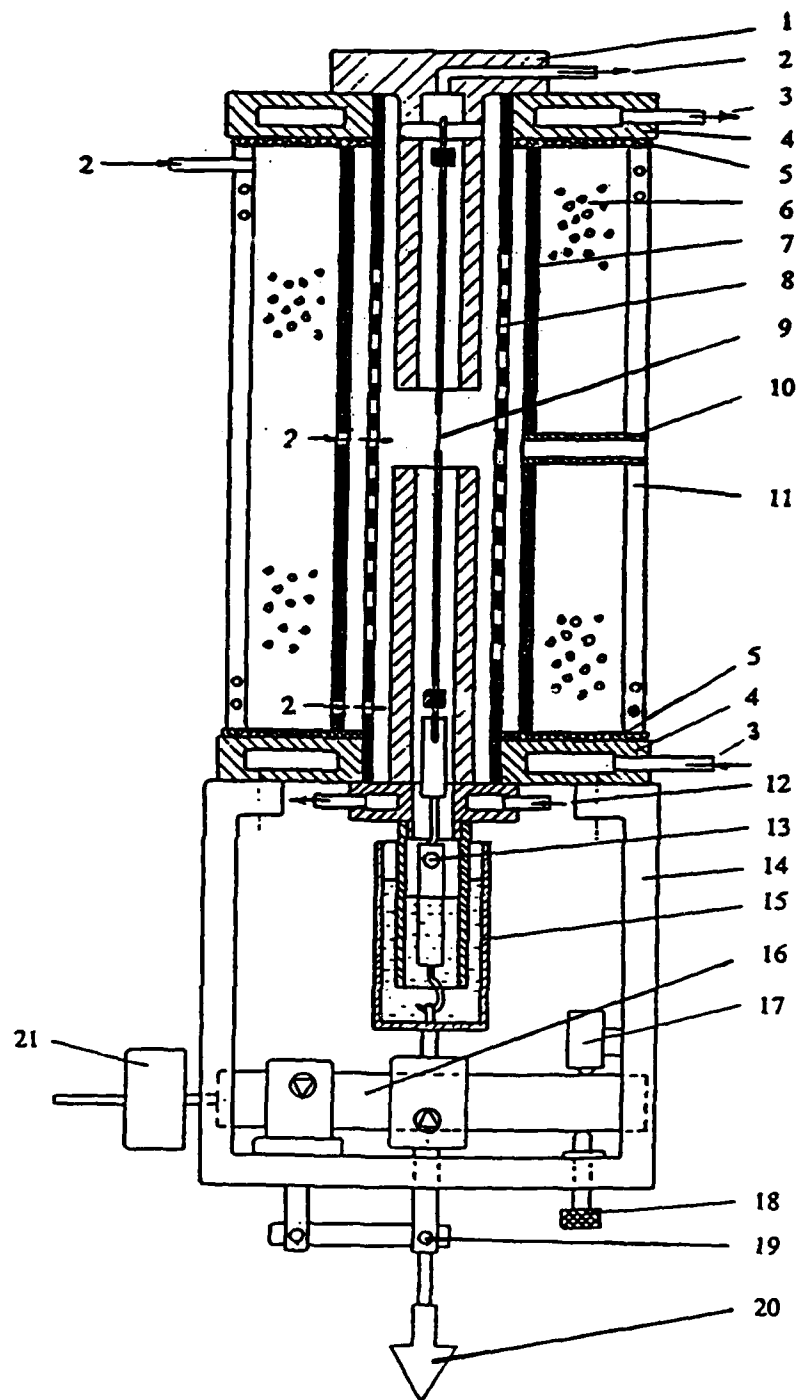


Fig. 3. Diagram of the high temperature furnace and the loading apparatus used for the creep experiments. (See the following page for number identification.)

1. Upper graphite test fixture (with pin to support test specimen)
2. Helium Inlets/outlet
3. Water Coolant Inlet/Outlet and Electrical Power Terminal
4. Upper/Lower Bulkhead Assembly
5. Electrical Insulator
6. Graphite Felt Pad Thermal Insulation
7. Graphite Shield
8. Graphite Heating Element
9. Uniaxial Creep Specimen
10. Window for Optical Pyrometer
11. Outer Furnace Shell (water cooled by internal piping)
12. Lower Water Cooled Jacket
13. Specimen-Rotating Beam Linkage (including universal joint)
14. Loading Frame
15. Water Seal
16. Loading Beam
17. LVDT
18. Screw Support
19. Guide Link
20. Dead Weight Load
21. Counter Balance



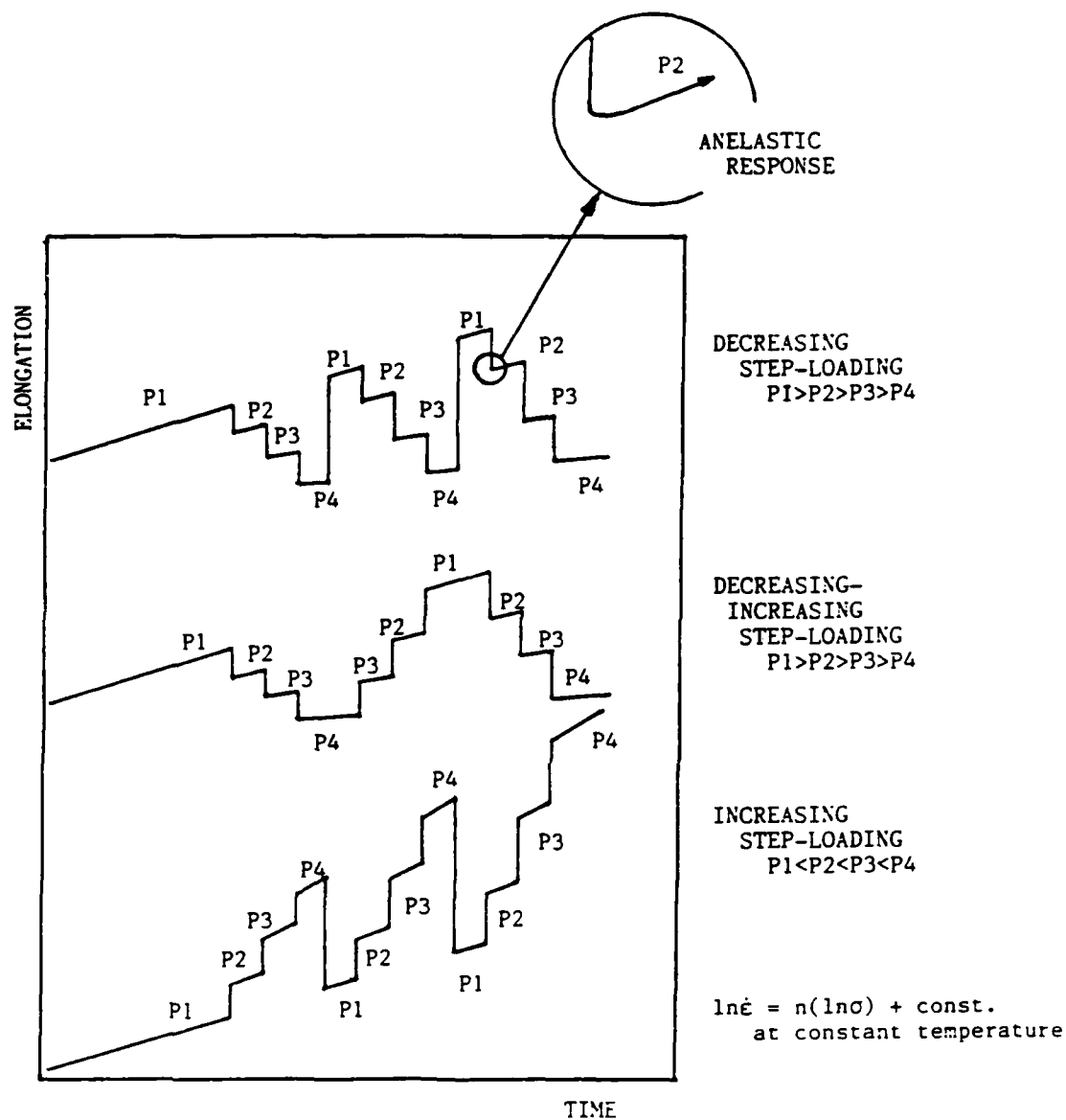


Fig. 4. A schematic showing the different procedures used to apply the load  $P$  during the constant temperature portion of the creep tests are illustrated here. When loads were decreased, a momentary, (1 to 5 mins.), anelastic response would be recorded before the linear, steady state resumed.

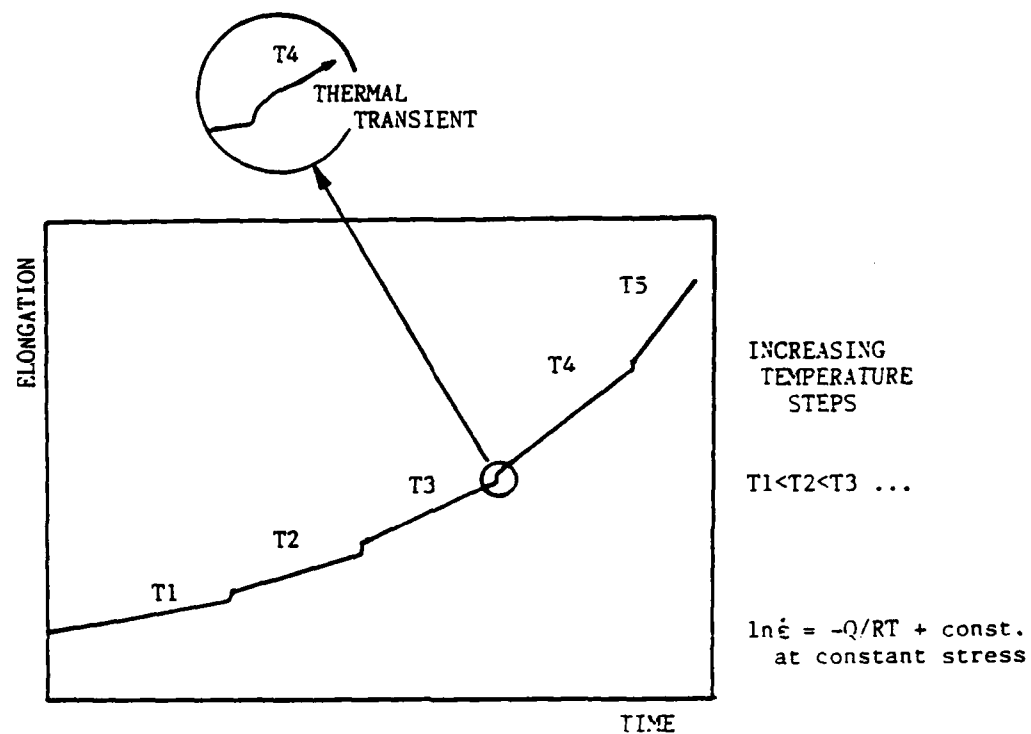


Fig. 5. Increasing temperature steps during a constant applied load were used to determine the apparent activation energy  $Q$ . The thermal transient represents the thermal response of the specimen and testing apparatus to a sudden temperature change.

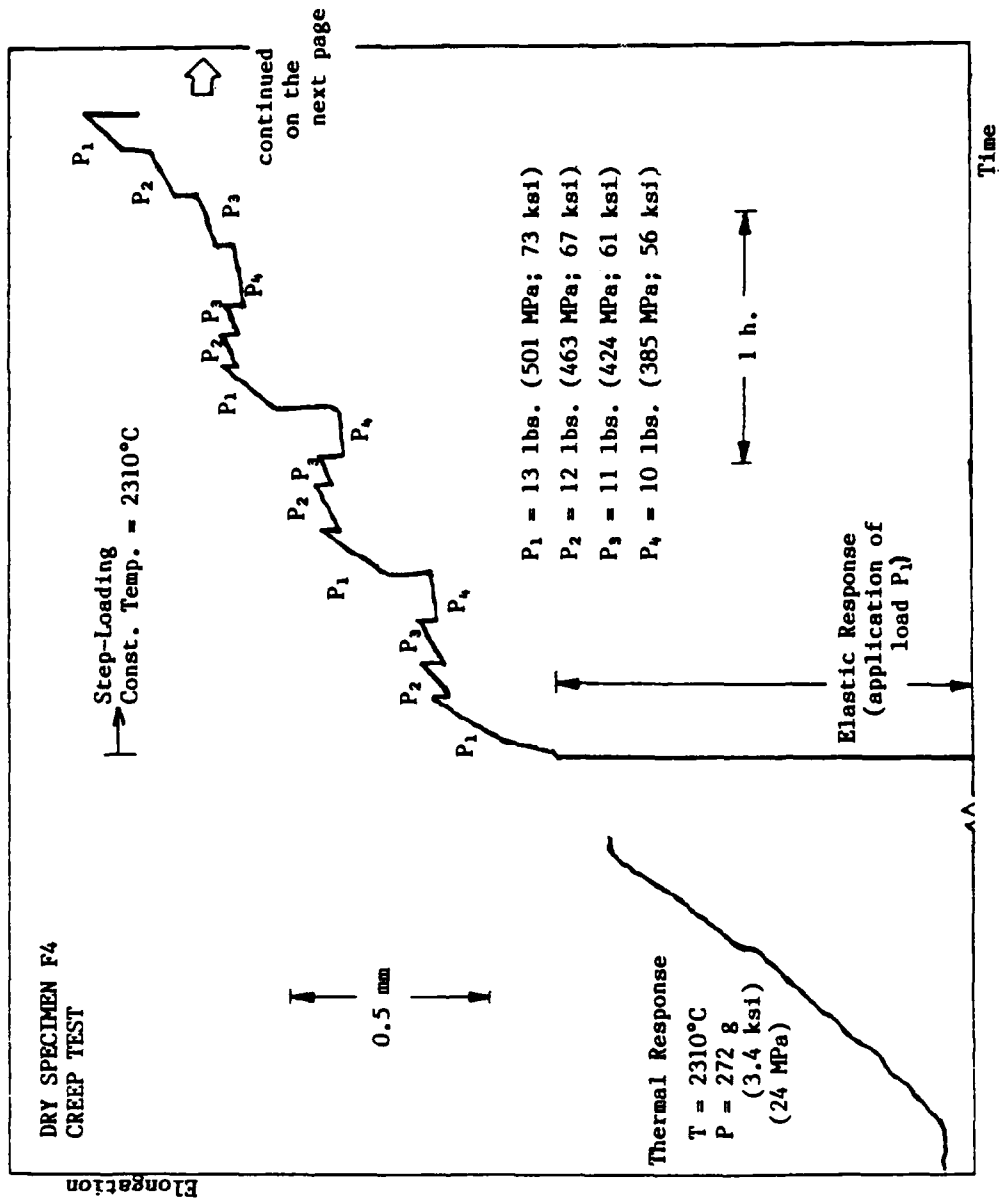
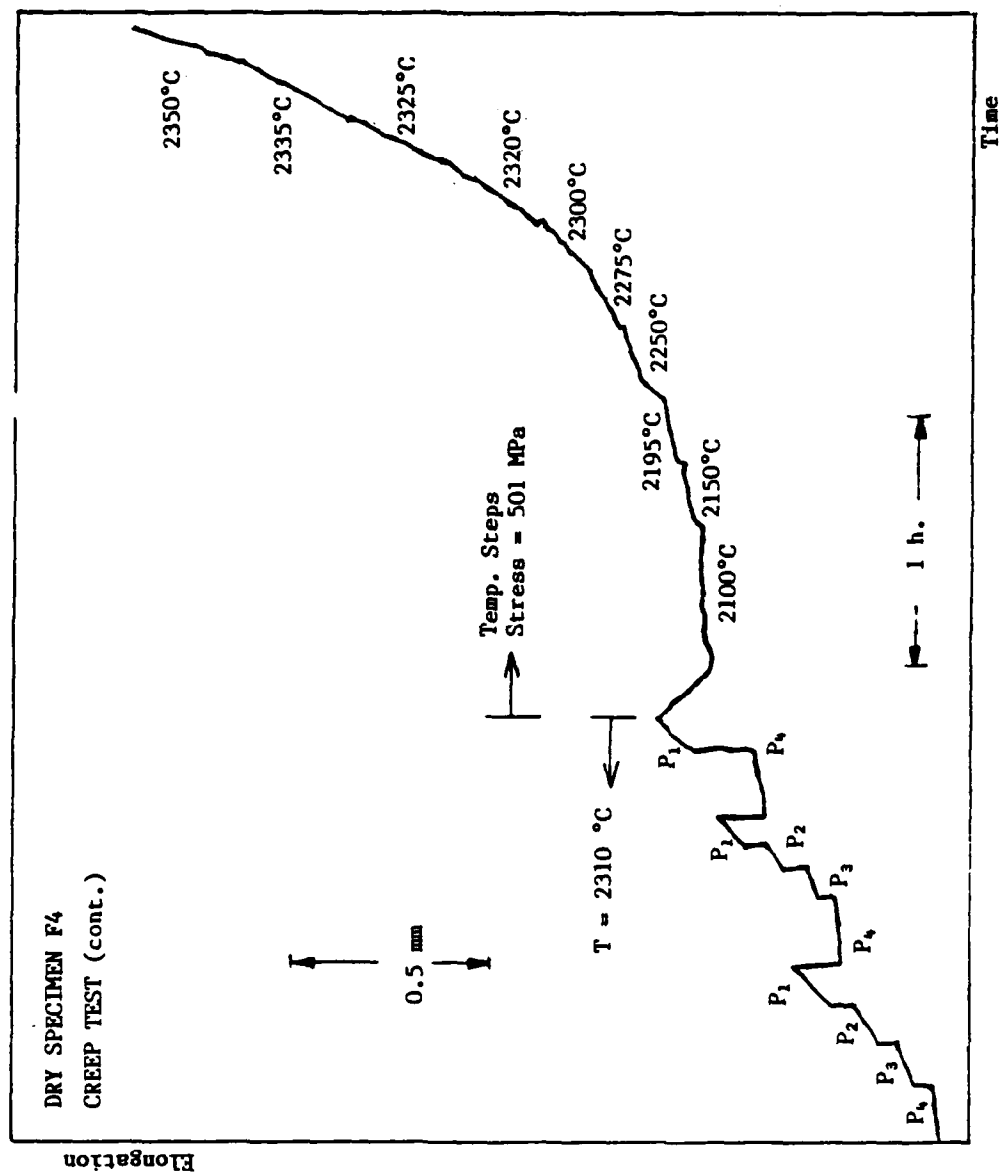


Fig. 6. The creep test of dry specimen F4. This figure is a scaled reproduction of the recordings taken from the actual test. (continued on the following page.)



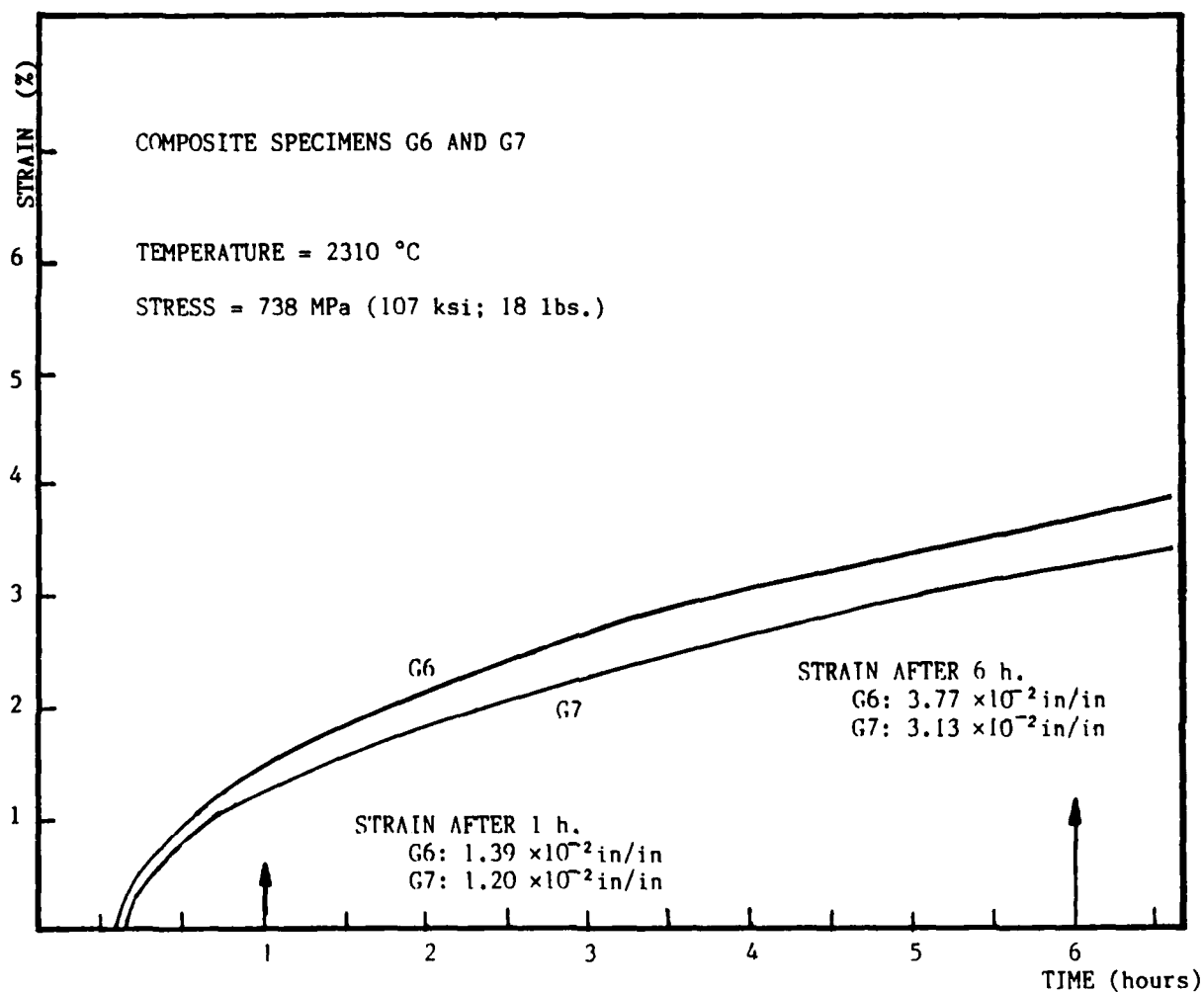


Fig. 7. Scaled reproductions of the creep curves of matrix-free ('dry') specimens G6 and G7. (See table 2.)

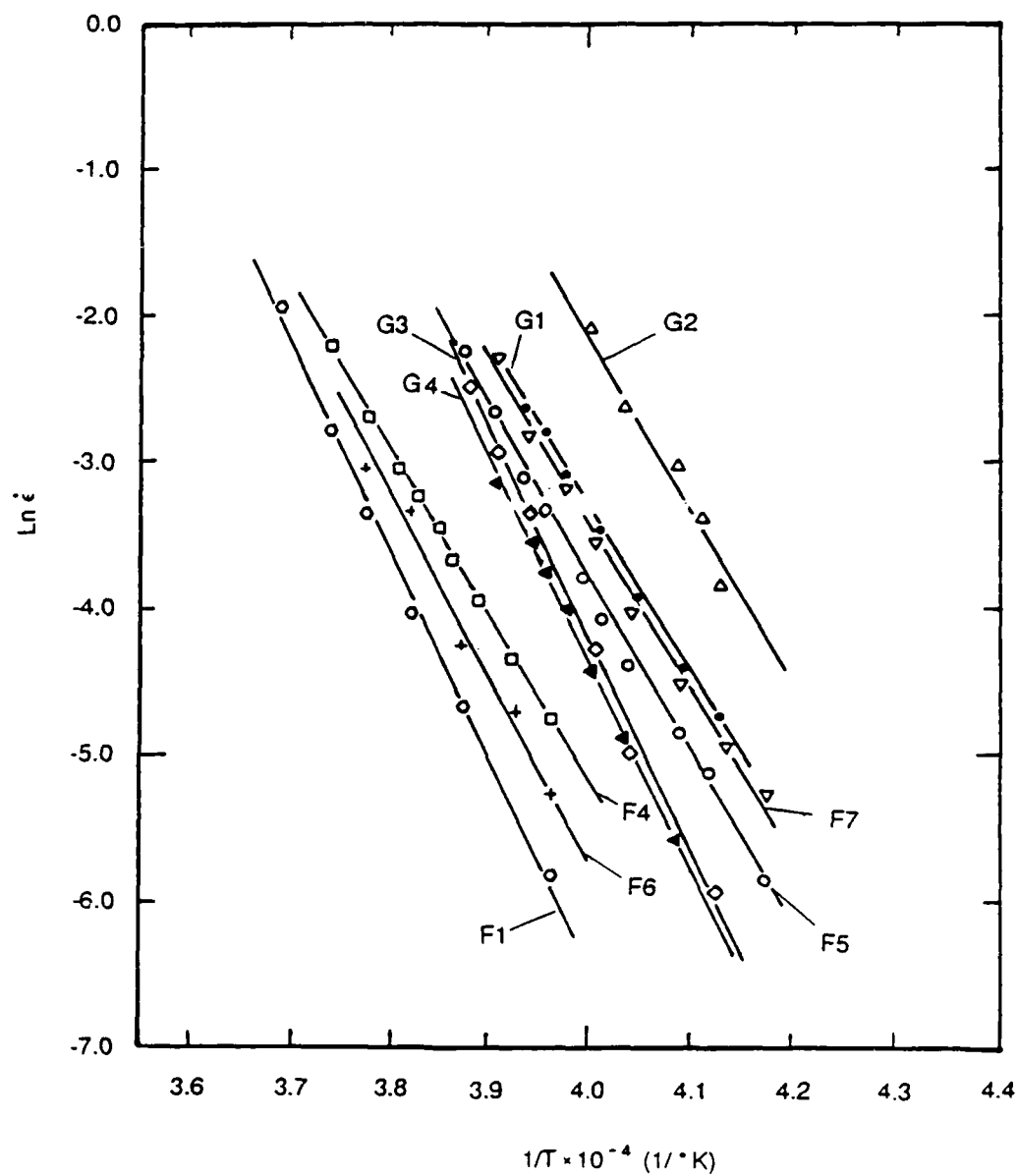


Fig. 8. The Arrhenius plots of all nine specimens used in the determination of the apparent activation energy  $Q$ . (See table 3.)

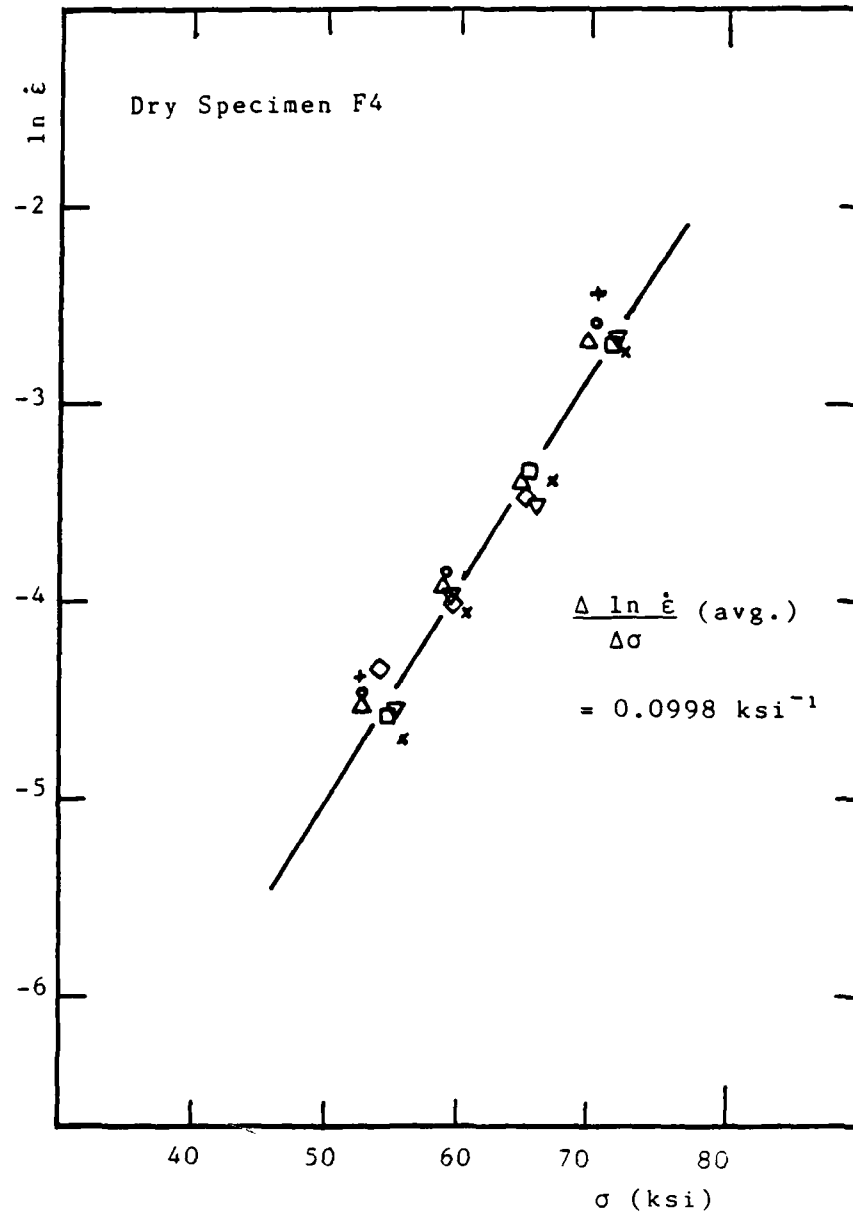


Fig. 9. Data plotted from the step-loading portion of specimen F4's creep test, used in the determination of the apparent activation volume. (See table 5.) The different plotted symbols refer to the direction of loading. See the caption of figure 11 for a detailed explanation.

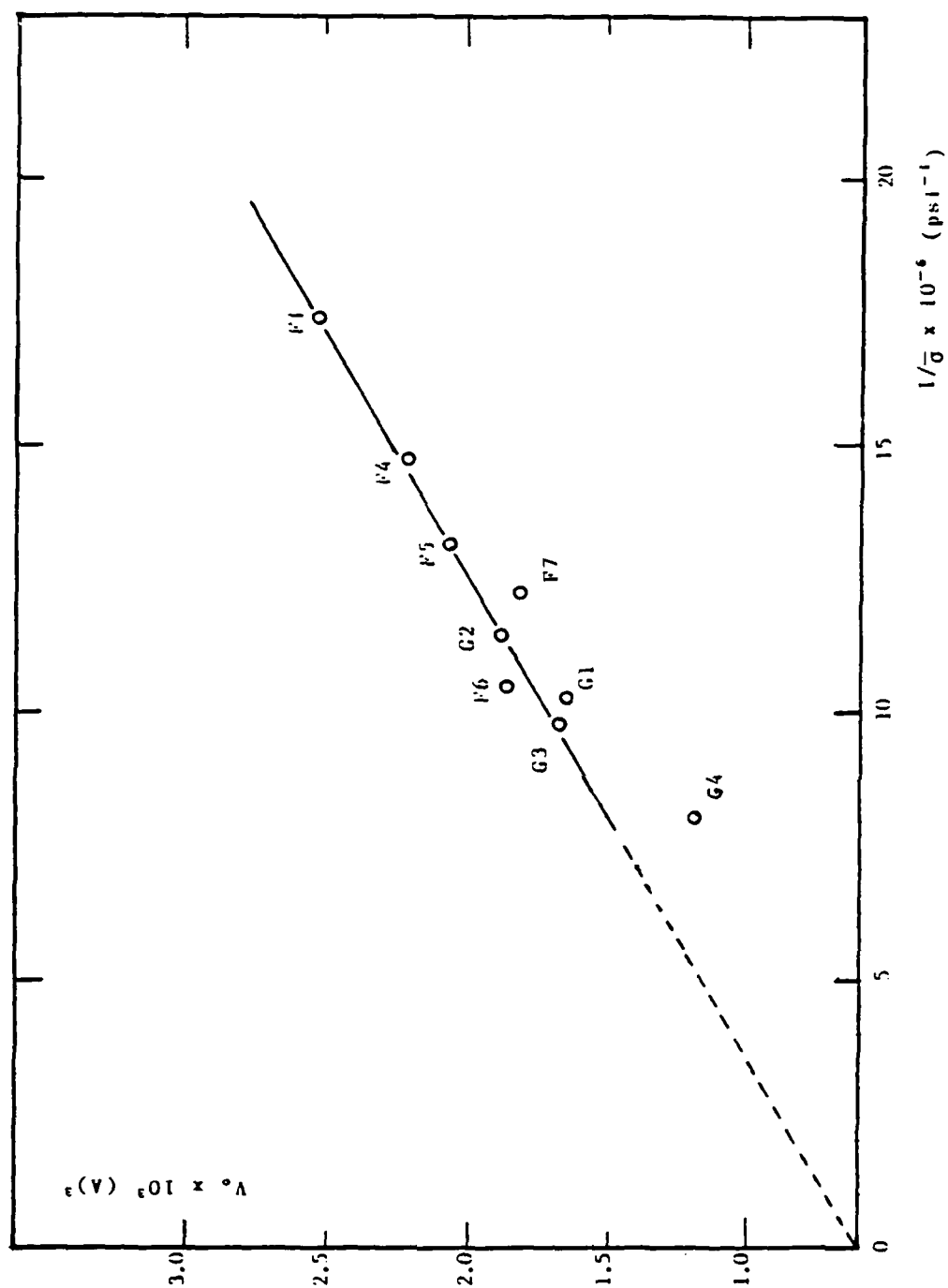


Fig. 10. Plot of the apparent activation volume  $V_a$  as a function of the inverse applied stress for the matrix-free and composite carbon specimens. (See equation 6.)



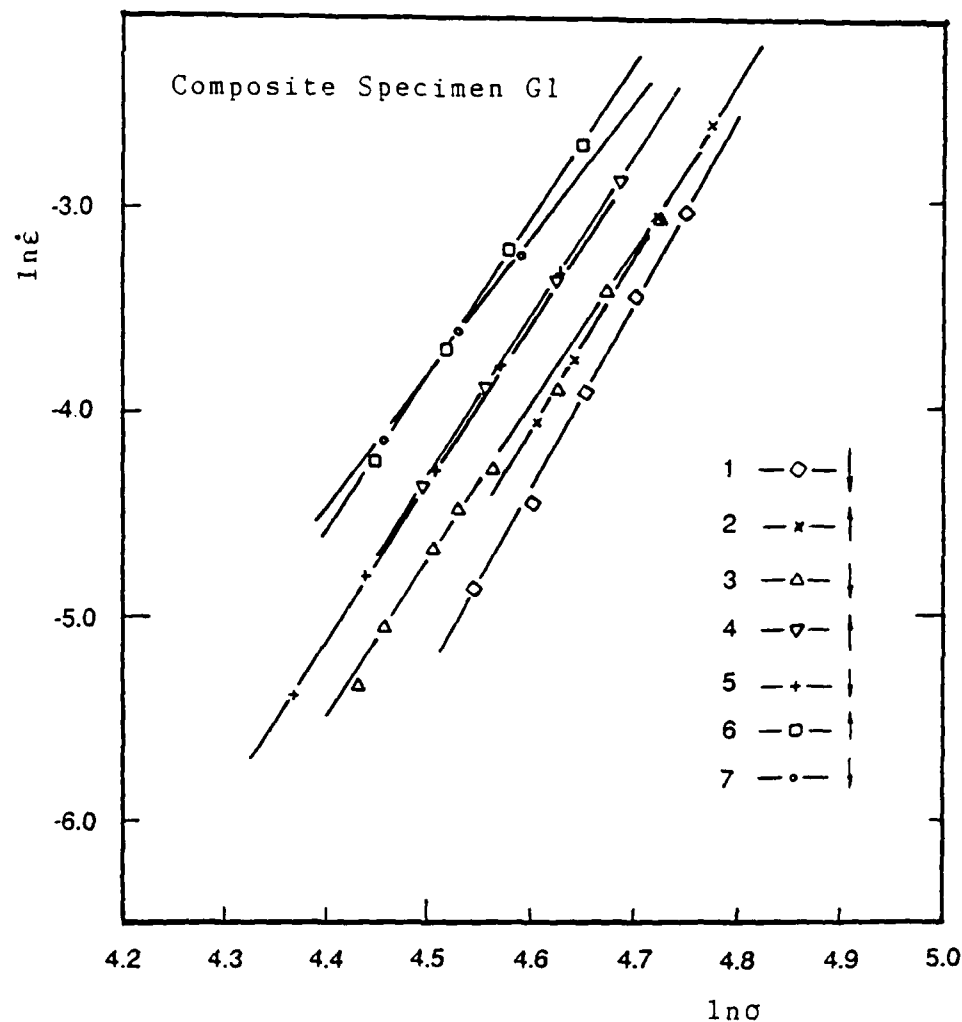
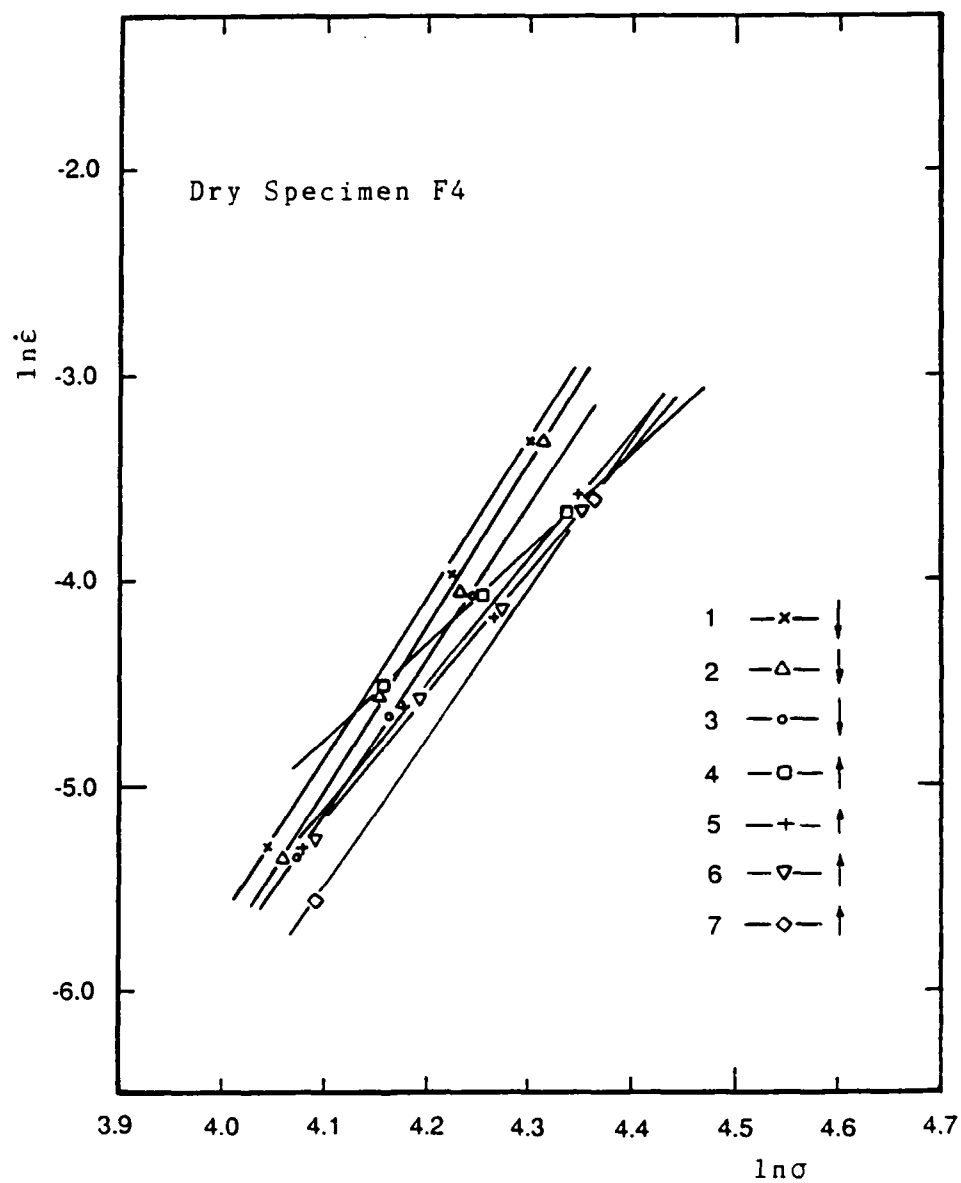
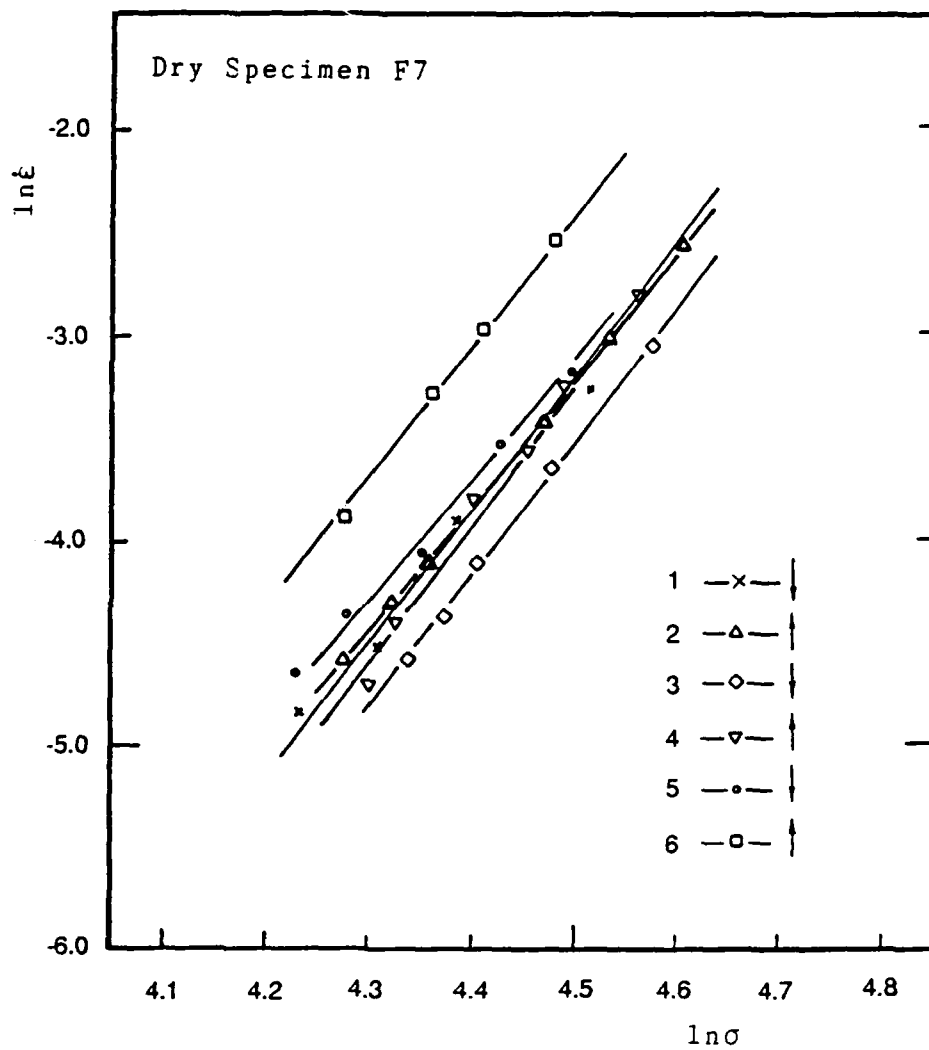


Fig. 11. The data plotted for three specimens, (composite specimen G1 on this page and matrix-free ('dry') specimens F4 and F7 on the two subsequent pages) used in the determination of the stress exponent  $n$  are shown.

Each specimen went through several 'steps' of increasing and decreasing loads, (see figure 11.). As an example, composite specimen G1 on this page went through 7 'steps' which allowed for 7 sets of data to be plotted. The value of  $n$  was then determined from all the values calculated from the slopes of the 7 plots.

The downward pointing arrows signify decreasing load steps. Upward pointing arrows signify increasing load steps. Similar plots were obtained for all of the specimens. The parallel appearance of each set of plots indicates that the loading history has no effect on subsequent creep-behavior (within reasonable stress ranges).





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